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THE UNIVERSITY

AND THE

HIGH SCHOOLS.

COMMUNICATION FROM A COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA TO THE CONVENTION OF COUNTY AND CITY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, HELD IN MINNEAPOLIS, AUGUST 26 AND 27, 1872, READ BY WILLIAM W. FOLWELL.

To the Honorable, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction; to the County Superintendents of Schools, the Superintendents of City Schools and the Principals of High and Graded Schools in Minnesota in Convention assembled:

GENTLEMEN:—At a meeting of the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota held in St. Paul on the 27th of June last a committee was appointed to attend this convention on behalf of the Board. The members are Regents Chas. S. Bryant, A. A. Harwood, Paris Gibson and Wm. W. Folwell.

The business of this committee is to formally invite this body to join the Board in an endeavor to bring about a vital, organic connection between the University and the High Schools. Belonging as the University does to the system of public instruction, its governing Board, and its Faculty of Instruction already feel that they have your sympathy, and so far as the circumstances will allow your co-operation. There is, however, a wide difference between a mere moral or sentimental union and a lawful, vital articulation of members in a common body; between a mere association and an organism.

The committee do not think it at all necessary to argue here in favor of a comprehensive organization of education. That point was gained when the first graded school was established. Of that event the logical consequence is, the highest honors of the University. Nor can there be more than one answer to the question "who shall organize education?" The State, the supreme civil authority, alone has the power to do it.

Although we are far behind many foreign countries in this matter, we have still made some progress. But very few years will pass before common schools will be organized in every State, and theoretically at least well organized.

Some of the newer States have established State *Universities*, probably without definite ideas of the place and function of the University, but with a kind of premonition that by and by it might form the culminating feature of a grand and comprehensive system of free, public education.

This is not the time for going into a description of a genuine University as existing in the old countries. Nor is there need; we shall never import the foreign university with its mediaeval customs and traditions. The university of the New World will be native, unmixed, American. Nevertheless this one thing is very certain and indisputable, that the university in America will at length occupy what is the proper university ground of the educational field.

President Porter, of Yale College, has very briefly and graphically stated the location of the University. "The University is a *teaching place* for those who are supposed to have been *trained* to the capacities and responsibilities of incipient manhood."

The University is not the place for *training* children and youth. "The essential thing in a University," says Dr. Angell," is *men*, both in the student's seats and the professors' chairs."

Unfortunately then, in our blind attempts at developing a system of public instruction we have almost forgotten a third great co-ordinate element in in the problem. We have left a great gulf between the common school and the University. We are aware that in some quarters that absurd educational heresy, that the University may rest directly on the common schools, has been entertained. It has probably in some instances influenced Legislatures. It has even been promulgated by so-called University men in the expectation of

securing popular interest and contributions to new enterprises. The scholars and educators of the country, however, have never been deceived by the clamor.

Confining attention strictly to the public education, and leaving out of sight private educational work as of no present concern, the committee think it apparent that our State systems are generally defective in failing to provide suitable schools between the University and the primary schools. So far as we are aware not a single State has organized or provided for any such schools as essentially State schools.—We are obliged to deny the full right of the high schools to claim such a place and rank in the State system proper, because, in general, they are organized and operated under special charters, for the benefit—sometimes exclusive benefit—of particular localities. They are necessarily inaccessible to the great body of the people, under the present legislation. In no State, so far as we are informed, does there exist any authorized relationship between the Universities and these local city high schools. The oldest and most successful of the State Universities contents herself with offering to send delegations from her faculty to such high schools as will receive them for the purpose of holding examinations of students wishing to enter the University. The executive officer reports, with enthusiasm, the accession of numerous well-prepared candidates from the public high schools.

There are unmistakable signs, throughout the country of a return to sanity in regard to the organization of higher education. There are indications of a growing indisposition to increase the number of colleges and of a tendency rather to increase and strengthen schools of academy rank as feeders of colleges and universities.

Some State Universities are putting forth, with great modesty, the suggestion that the public high schools might advantageously be brought into the State system of public instruction and thus into living union with the University. We are not aware that legislation to this end has anywhere been asked for. East and West tax-payers are becoming more and more liberal towards the High Schools, and are demanding of teachers and principals higher scholarship and higher skill. The need and the value of thorough and permanent middle schools was never so much appreciated, whether viewed with reference to the University or the schools below. At length it is seen and acknowledged that there can be no *University indeed*, except on a foundation of really *high* schools. In this matter we may learn a lesson from a foreign system of public instruction.

The German University would be an impossibility without the German gymnasium and its modern rival the Real School. Says President McCosh of Princeton College, in an article on "The German Universities:"

"In turning to the German universities, we find that their success, like that of the Scotch colleges, depends very much on their preparatory schools. The great middle schools of Germany are divided into two classes, the Gymnasien and the Real-Schulen, in the first of which, the chief attention is given to languages and literature, and in the second to science always with literature. Some years ago, having received authority from the Education Bureau in Berlin to visit any school in Prussia, I inspected a sufficient number of these to enable me to judge of the system, which in respect of the thoroughness of the organization and the accuracy of the instruction conveyed, is worthy of all the commendation which has been bestowed upon it. *Indeed, it is the one thing, which, after somewhat modifying it, we should borrow from Germany, and carry out thoroughly in all the states of this country.* * * * I am convinced that the German universities, with great excellencies, have also great defects, which we should take care not to transplant in this country. But the gymnasien are vastly superior to the corresponding schools in the United States or in any other nation. It is by means of these schools that Prussia has been able to rear such a body of educated young men, who are destined to raise their country, both in the arts of war and peace,

above every other nation on the continent of Europe. and both Great Britain and America, might find it for their good to study this peculiarity of Prussia.*this essential element of her present greatness.*"

Such testimony and such facts may well challenge our attention. The committee fully believe that all will agree with this distinguished educationist that America needs a thorough system of middle or secondary schools approximating in character those of Prussia, but still adapted to American circumstances.

Without further argument the committee assume these points:

1. That there shall be at length, a comprehensive organization of public education in Minnesota, embracing all grades.

2. That the State University may form the "roof and crown" of a noble structure of High Schools based firmly on the broad foundation of the common schools of the State.

3. That the Superintendents, principals and teachers of the High and graded schools, one and all, will now and always, co-operate with the University authorities in securing that actual union so essential alike to the schools and University.

These things being agreed to, next come the practical questions *"what to do,"* and *"how to do it?"*

As to the latter question, the Committee are of the opinion that no legislation should be asked for until. after discussion and reflection, the educating men immediately concerned should be agreed as to the laws necessary. Premature legislation might only embarrass and delay. We therefore offer a very brief statement of the problem now demanding solution together with some preliminary suggestions.

The public high school, as already intima ed, exists under a special charter for the benefit of a local community, having but little or no connection, organically with the State system. The course of study is contrived accordingly, and without reference to any superior institution. Existing primarily for the benefit of that great number of youth who having been advanced beyond the common school, cannot carry their education beyond in to the College or University sphere. the high school *must* arrange its curriculum accordingly. The work of educating this great body of youth is one not to be slighted. Nor is there any need of neglect; for happily, as we believe, the high schools while carrying it on with the utmost efficiency, can at the same time undertake advantageously and with economy, the preparation of students looking forward to the University. The history of the German secondary schools—the gymnasia and real schools proves this. Their courses of study planned with reference primarily to this University are still in a remarkable way adapted to the wants of students who cannot advance to the University and thus a double work is carried on in the same school successfully and without embarrassment.

This is what the American high school can do—it can educate the *ten** students who do not go to the University along with the *one* who does, to the decided profit of all. It will take some ingenuity to frame the course or courses of study, but it can be done—because it has been done.

The Committee of the Board of Regents do not presume to appear before this body with any detailed programme of studies asking its adoption or endorsement. They content themselves with merely asking your counsel and collaboration with the University in a work of common concern. It will not be out of place, however, to further open the question, "What shall the High Schools do?" Two things are here to be considered. First, What studies shall be admitted? and second, to what extent shall they be carried? As to the former there will probably be no dispute until we arrive at the ancient languages. Mathematics, the Sciences, History, Rhetoric, the Modern Languages, Elocution, Drawing and Music will be at once admitted by all, as being useful and practical. We cannot now enter upon an argument in favor of classical education, nor would it be just to that education to assume in regard to it any defensive position. Sanctioned by the wisdom of centuries it

*See report of Dr. John W. Hoyt, U. S. Commissioner to the Paris Exhibition, p. 84.

stands to-day the very backbone of every educational system of the world. The people of Minnesota cannot afford to deprive their youth of classical culture. Great are manufactures, agriculture, machinery, art—but *literature* is greater than all—the supreme worldly (and yet not wholly earthly) interest and delight. The committe trust that the classics may soon have fair room in all as they already have in many of the High Schools of the State.

In respect of the extent to which high school work shall be carried it will be necessary to distinguish between the actual and the theoretical limit. So long as we are a frontier State with a poor and sparse population it will be impossible for all High Schools to reach the same limit. Those of the newer towns in particular will need time to grow.

The theoretical limit of High School or Secondary work is the line from which University work,—the work of incipient manhood,—begins. It is where training gives place to teaching, discipline to investigation. We may here again refer to the German Secondary school as described by Dr. McCosh, who says :

"The course of instruction in the Gymnasien and Real-Schulen * * embraces not only the branches taught in our academies or high schools but those taught in the freshmen and sophomore classes of our university courses."

It is remarkable indeed that American experience indicates almost exactly the same dividing line between High School and University—or secondary and superior—education. The close of the Sophomore year is the time very generally chosen for the introduction of optional studies or of special courses of study in American colleges. Up to to that time the studies are uniform and disciplinary.

The plan of University organization adopted by the Board Regents, and after mature deliberation re-affirmed, has this fact for a principle, that university work begins now in America about the close of the second college year. They have accordingly segregated the studies of the two lower college years, and announced their intention of dropping them off to the High Schools so soon as they may be able to assume them. Meantime the University will teach these branches in a separate department with appropriate methods and discipline.

The committee regard the assumption of this work by the high schools as merely a question of time. We have already several high schools in our State which can now do a large part of it and do it well. Some indeed offer instruction in studies of the upper College years. It will doubtless be found much easier for the high schools to advance their mathematics and sciences, than the linguistic studies.

The economy of such a division of work is too apparent to need discussion. The elevation of the high schools into pro-collegiate institutions officered by a considerable corps of learned teachers, might well make them to our cities and people what the secondary schools of Germany are, "the pride and glory of the German people;" "and well they may be," adds Dr. Hoyt, "for in no schools in the world are physical, intellectual and moral discipline so admirably harmonized."

There is no doubt of the tendency to push secondary instruction in America much further than has generally been thought practicable. Very considerable advances have been made both in public and private institutions.

For instance, the Academies of the State of New York, as shown by Dr. Barnard in his annual report as President of Columbia College, for 1871, now teach, one or another, all the studies of the American College. There were in the years 1870–71 900 students in those academies pursuing the studies, not of the lower merely, but of the higher college classes. Indeed this interference with College work has become a matter of complaint on the part of College men. Harvard College having raised the standard of admission very far above that of other Colleges, now proposes to drop the freshman year just as soon as the fitting schools can take the work.

The same tendency to elevate secondary education is clearly apparent in the courses of study set forth in the

reports of the Superintendents of Education in New York, Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, and especially Philadelphia. The Central High School of Philadelphia, will compare with very great advantage with many institutions advertised under the lofty name of University.

Before discussing the subject the committee desire to submit a brief account of the present status of the University in regard to the preparatory work. There is probably no doubt but that all will approve the action of the Board of Regents in beginning where they did and substantially as they did the work of the institution. Up to this time they have carried on all the classes of a preparatory department and it has not seemed to them prudent heretofore to drop off even the lowest. So great however has been the development of the high schools and so hearty the disposition on their part to co-operate that they have already resolved to drop the first year of preparatory work at the close of the University year about to open, and the next two years later unless sooner ordered. With respect to the rate and the time of dropping off this elementary work the Board feel the need of the counsel of the Superintendents and Principals. Cramped as we are for room, and embarrassed by the slow accumulation of funds, it is our desire to dispense with the lower classes just so soon as may be possible. But at the same time we wish carefully to avoid leaving any gap between the Schools and the University. Our principle is to begin the University work *wherever the High Schools leave off*, in order to be if not in legalized connection at least in virtual union with them.

All of which is respectfully submitted by the COMMITTEE.

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